

Is cloning the future a pre-crime

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

None of this would have been possible without the fantastic resources generously provided by immensely talented emulator authors, and communities such as Hall of Light, Lemon Amiga, Lemon 64, World of Spectrum, Moby Games, World of Longplays and Recorded Amiga Games. Thank you for your tireless dedication to preserving the history of gaming.

Why is it that futuristic, violent action games are always set in *post*-apocalyptic worlds? Those in which life as we know it has gone mouldy-rotting-pear-shaped, and the rapidly dwindling smattering of survivors must fight tooth and nail to remain so?

Would it not be refreshing to - for once - play as an easygoing, care-free character based in a *pre*-apocalyptic world? One where peace and harmony reign supreme, and everyone has a jolly nice time crocheting teddy bears wearing stripey bobble hats and scarves?

No? As we were then.

Motor Massacre aka Road Raiders in the US (probably because you guys whip out automatic firearms and mow down communities of innocent bystanders far more often than us Europeans) is about as cliched as Mad Max rip-off

number 762. But not no. 549. That one was just *loosely* based on the 1979 Mel Gibson vehicle that launched his international movie career.



You'll know everything has gone to hell in a handbasket because the landscape has been plastered with 'drink Cola' billboards. I believe that's a nod towards John A. Romero's Dawn of the Dead. If not, it still perfectly illustrates the irrevocable downfall of humanity. ;)

Curiously, the same crew went on to develop an *officially licensed* Mad Max title for the NES in 1990. Is it any good? I've not played it personally, so I'll consult [Questicle.net](http://questicle.net). In August 2012 they 'awarded' (vilified?) it a whopping 0%...



"Mad Max might be one of the most pointless, unnecessary, unfun games I've yet to play on the NES, and - shocker of shockers - it's a licensed title that nobody asked for. Just terrible."

Does that mean they know it's awful without actually playing it, based on reputation alone? No idea, I'm confused.

Courtesy of Chris Gray's Ontario-based 'Gray Matter' game development team (geddit?), Motor Massacre was published in 1988 by Gremlin (and Mindscape in the US). Over-egging the pudding somewhat you *could* argue it's GTA for the Amiga, nine years before the genuine article emerged for DOS and Windows. Like DMA Design's interpretation, Motor Massacre combines aggressive battle-driving with on-foot,

gun-toting zombie carnage... assuming you can find a zombie hack for the original title in the series. I should really research that. But won't.



Apparently 'Dr A. Noid'...

pause for raucous guffawing

...instigated the 'Great Biological Holocaust' depicted in Motor Massacre by getting the world hooked on a slimy food substitute known as 'Slu'. With real food now an endangered species, the "mad little green guy" had the populace of the world over a barrel, turning life on the 'Outside' into his own 'demented playground'. Once physiologically dependent, all the drug-addled fiends cared about was sinking their gnashers into even more of the pernicious gunk.



It's the mirror image of Manchester city centre in 2018; vagabonds enslaved by Spice, mindlessly rocking back and forth in shop doorways rambling on about impending alien invasion, and the need to defend ourselves from the threat with tinfoil hats and Cabbage Patch dolls.

Now zombified Slu addicts cruise the lawless streets on four wheels, and prowl the dilapidated buildings on foot like slathering rabid dogs craving fresh, uncontaminated blood.



You - 'Mr Hunter' - enjoying the sanctuary of the last uninfected city, are safe, yet bored, under normal circumstances leading the adrenaline-soaked life of a hit-man for hire.

Old habits die hard, however, and with a generous price on the scalp of the 'schizoid doctor', you'd be crazy to turn down the work.



Curiously, the Legion of Doom also performed under the name 'Road Warriors'. In one bout they pulverised Wolverine and cannibalised his retractable Adamantium blades. True story.

So, armed with your pistol and ram-ready, weaponised ATV (Armored Tactical Vehicle), you brave the dystopian, urban wild west of what used to be human civilisation in search of the demented doc. Protected by a loyal army of mutant guards, and plagued by oil slicks, gun turrets, land mines and dead ends, this isn't going to be a walk in the park.



Post-apocalypse, money is worthless; the new and *only* currency is Slu. Find a petrol station to relieve you of your cache and you can exchange it for *petrol*, in the *petrol* station, no less (definitely *not* 'gas' as you can't fuel your car with something that can float out of the tank and into the atmosphere).



Also on the menu dished up by the 'Clam' (ho-ho) representative are vehicle repairs, a shotgun, four-way gun, assault rifle, uzi, machine gun, ammo, smoke generator, turbo-charger, armour, precision air-brakes, and a radar. You can even purchase a double strength .88 Magnum. Wow, Walls really *have* stepped up their wares lately. Ice cream with a kick!



Patrolling the forsaken buildings, slamming through doors (that are probably already unlocked, for the drama alone), first aid kits can be seized to top up your health. Though of course are worth collecting just to elicit an 'ah-haaah' sound effect alone.

Other useful supplies such as fuel and ammo have also helpfully been left scattered about the ground, saving you a trip to Asda, and a wad of precious \$\$. Keys too for when your battering ram shoulders begin to ache.

Fallen zombie carcasses don't persist in situ, rather dissolve into the ground as in Technocop, another of Gray Matter's Amiga titles, each illustrated by Rob Anderson (amongst others).



In the Amstrad and Spectrum version you'll notice the zombie sprites are identical to you, sans shoes, and with their sleeves rolled up. Memory-saving genius in action!

You may actually get to kill some of them too if you can bear to wait while the next section loads, and loads, and loads some more. Next to this, Neverending Story looks like a pamphlet!

With regards to the driving segments, impressively you have the option to choose between two separate control methods, one much easier to master than the other.

There's the traditional overhead driving game system common to the likes of Overdrive, Nitro, Micro Machines et al: up and down to accelerate and decelerate (or reverse), with left and right for turning anti-clockwise and clockwise.



Then there's the kiddy system, employing simple directional controls: left for left, right for right, up for... you get the gist I'm sure.

Saving your game is permitted, though only when tearing up the streets. Still, it's nice to have the option even with that caveat. In contrast, many action games insist you complete the entire game in one go, or not at all. And that's just not practical.

We often moan that game manuals are little more than a hazy afterthought, resulting in flimsy single sheet inserts. It's refreshing then to see that the one accompanying Motor Massacre covers every last detail concerning everything you might want to know. Plus plenty that's so obvious it doesn't really need to be said. I suppose you've got to cover all the bases for people who've never played a computer game before.

Eventually - maybe not in the same year you started, or even *this* lifetime - you'll discover a pass granting you access to the game-concluding arena at the city limits. Here you'll

encounter the caliph of chaos himself, along with his army of the dead slaves. Well, once you've conquered arenas one and two anyway.

Swapping your ATV for a more compact 'ram car', you leave your artillery at the door. Instead, opponents must be pummelled to smithereens, or shunted over the arenas' precipice to their doom. All the while avoiding pitfalls such as landmines, flipping tiles, and... erm, pits into which you fall, to your death. Think of it as extreme stock car racing.

As a 'buy one, get one free' deal the two segments show promise. After all, the same concept spawned 77 (or whatever) GTA titles, sequels and spin-offs. In the process we made the transition from 2D to 3D, trailing the series through several console generations of technological advancements.

Sadly this isn't anywhere close to being on par with GTA. As the competently drawn title screen makes way for some very amateurish in-game graphics we're introduced to a mediocre, tedious Sunday driving affair, book-ended by a scanty Gauntlet clone.

There's little variation to the scenery, sprites or gameplay between areas of the map, and Ben Daglish's top-drawer, supreme talent is completely wasted (passing away at the far-too-premature age of 52 that's depressingly apt). Silent 'music' may be enough to win the Turner prize for artistic expression, but it doesn't cut it in the world of gaming. Likewise, there isn't nearly enough going on in terms of gameplay to keep us amused for more than a few minutes. In the sophic words of one of our Slu-contorted, shambling cohorts, it's all a bit "uggggghhhhh".